= 100E/EA-0240

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

U. S. Forest Service, Southern Region

Responsible Official - Regional Forester

Cooperating Agency - Department of Energy

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM

D. Gray Aydelott, Team Leader - USFS
Roger Pitts, Forester - USFS
Mignon Moore, Resource Assistant - USFS
Ernie Chaput, Asst. Mgr. for Admin. - DOE
Dick Jansen, Env. Sci. - DOE

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Inter-Agency Agreement for control of National Forest System lands (Sumter National Forest) adjacent to the Savannah River Plant, Aiken County, South Carolina.

I. Purpose and Need

The Department of Energy (DOE) has formally requested occupancy and use of the 6,021 acres (in three parcels) of the Sumter National Forest adjacent to DOE's Savannah River Plant for the purpose of enhancing the security posture at this vital national security facility. A location map is included in Figure 1.

The Department of Energy's Savannah River Plant (SRP) is a unique and important facility in the nation's nuclear weapons program. The products of the SRP are required for both the production of new nuclear weapons and the maintenance of existing weapons in the custody of the Department of Defense. The majority of the facilities at SRP are in direct support of this national defense mission, and many are one-of-a-kind within the Department's production capabilities. All of these facilities must be protected against any act which will have an unacceptable impact upon production activities.

In recent years, there has been a continuing increase in the use of international and national terrorism by various groups to achieve political, economic, and other objectives. The territory and facilities of the United States are not immune to these acts, and the incidence of such activities is also increasing in the United States. These trends and their implications upon U. S. facilities have been the subject of intense interest and concern by the National Security Council and congressional leaders. The Department of Energy has revised its internal threat quidance to more specifically recognize the terrorist threat, and its potential for acts of sabotage resulting in program interruptions and adverse effects upon public safety. Therefore, in addition to the traditional security requirement of protecting the nation's stockpile of special nuclear materials, weapons components, and complete weapons from unauthorized access, the new threat guidance places more stringent criteria upon protecting against more malevolent acts which could cause (1) unacceptable interruptions in DOE weapon production activities, and (2) unacceptable health and safety impacts upon the general public.

In response to revised Agency direction, many additions and upgrades have been made in the security programs at the Savannah River Plant. Some of the more significant actions are:

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- Fencing, gates, and manned barricades have been established on the through-plant public highway (SC 125) to deny unauthorized access to other plant facilities.
- A proposal to establish restricted air space over the SRP has been published in the Federal Register.
- A firm specializing in security services has been obtained for SRP.
 The number of security inspectors has coubled and the level of training has increased. Special response teams have been established.
- Numerous physical improvements at SRP facilities have been authorized including surveillance, alarm systems, physical barriers, personnel access and control systems, and specialized weaponery and communications systems.
- Security support helicopters have been authorized to provide detection, assessment, and response capabilities.

This request to grant occupancy and use of National Forest System lands to DOE, with the objective of limiting public access to these lands, is consistent with and complementary to the other actions taken by DOE to increase the security posture at the SRP. The lands are in close proximity to SRP facilities whose uninterrupted operations are essential to meeting the DOE national defense mission. For example, facilities in close proximity to tracts 1 and 2 (figure 2) include but are not limited to the 703-A Administration building, the central computer complex in 703-A, numerous classified documents housed in 703-A, teletype and facsimile equipment in 703-A, the SRP Antenna Site, the Savannah River Laboratory (773-A), and the 300-M Fuel Fabrication Facilites. Control of these lands also allows-centrol of access to SRP Road/.

Security in tract 3 (figure 2) is concerned with protection of supporting facilities necessary for the effective and reliable operation of the SRP. Facilities in close proximity to this tract include electrical equipment, cooling water steam distribution systems, power generation facilities, and experimental facilities. The security posture of this portion of SRP includes advanced detection, assessment, and denial systems, additional patrols—including river patrols—, and facility modifications. The DOE's ability to deny public access to this tract would aid in the effectiveness and reliability of SRP security systems by reducing significantly the possibility of establishment of staging areas in close prosimity to critical facilities or undetected access onto existing DOE-owned land.

Public involvement began on March 15, 1984, and continued through April 27, during which time the public was invited to express their views and make recommendations. A team consisting of personnel from the Forest Service and the Department of Energy met with elected officials, landowners, news media, and organized groups. Aiken and Augusta newspapers printed articles on the subject and requested their readers write the Forest Service and express their views. Section V contains a list of agencies, groups, and individuals that expressed interest.

A majority of those who expressed their views are concerned about the loss of hunting and fishing opportunities on Tract 3, which consists of 4,780 acres. Tracts 1 and 2, consisting of 1,241 upland acres, provide no fishing opportunities and are not in high demand for hunting. See Figure 2.

The need for additional land in order to enhance the security of the Savannah River Plant was questioned by most of those who expressed their views. Specifically, many expressed the opinion that the public's loss of recreational opportunities on Tract 3 is not justified by the marginal increase in SRP security. Items most often pointed out were: (1) the fact that the swamp unit joins the Savannah River over which the Department of Energy has no control; and (2) that the south bank of the river is private land which provides unlimited access to the river. Most who expressed their views concerning the Talatha tracts agreed that the closure of these tracts to the public could indeed enhance the security of the Plant, and further that the loss of hunting opportunities on this area would not be significant.

Loss of overnight camping opportunities that are available in one primitive camping area on Tract 1 was not questioned by those who expressed concern about the loss of hunting and fishing opportunities but was questioned by one group who has used the area on 2 occasions in the last 4 to 6 years as a camping area for protesters of this nation's nuclear policies. This group's major concern is that they be provided a place to camp on Tract 1 or on some other public land near by.

The Regional Forester must decide whether to honor all or a portion of DCE's request while providing for multiple-use management including public access to the extent possible considering national security, safety and public health.

II. Description of Affected Environment

Acquisition of land for the Savannah River Plant began in 1950 and was completed in 1952. The original plantsite consisted of 200,831 acres (314 square miles). In 1952, the USDA-Forest Service entered into agreement with the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) for management of that portion of the Savannah River Plant land not used for nuclear production.

On October 13, 1972, 6,021 acres were transferred to the Forest Service as follows:

- (1) Tract 1 Area VII (b) Talatha 706 acres
- (2) Tract 2 Area VII (a) Talatha E35 acres
- (3) Tract 3 Area VI Swamp 4,780 acres

All three tracts are adjacent to the western perimeter of the Savannah River Plant and are the National Forest Lands on which DOE has requested used and occupancy. See Figure 2.

The USDA-Forest Service management activities on these lands are much the same as for other National Forest System lands.

The two Talatha tracts are separated by DOE land. Both tracts are bound on the southeast by SRP Road 1. Tract 2 is bound on the southwest by S. C. Road 125, and on the northwest by County Road 62. Tract 1 is bound on the north by an eight-foot wide disked trail. Both tracts have woods' roads that intersect with SRP Road 1. A county road crosses Tract 1 and intersects with SRP Road 1. The only public vehicular access to Tract 3 is by FS Secondary Road (Bent Rim), which transects the tract and deadends adjacent to private property on the west side. Tract 3 is accessible by the Savannah River which forms the southern boundary. The tract is bound on the west and north by private land and on the east and north by DOE lands.

In 1973, a small primitive campground was developed at Skinface Pond on Tract 3. A loop trail of approximately 100 yards and three or four picnic tables were provided. One flowing well exists. This area is used mostly by hunters and fishermen.

The primitive campground on Tract 1 is open to the public; however, vehicular traffic is permitted only during the annual controlled SRP deer hunts (October 1 - January 1). During these deer hunts, portable toilets are provided. No water is available at the site.

The South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department (SCWMRD), in cooperation with the Forest Service, opened the three tracts to public hunting under a S. C. Game Management Area agreement in 1972.

Since the Forest Service began managing these lands in 1972, an active timber management program has been underway including prescribed burning for wildlife and control of litter buildup, commercial thinning of immature timber stands and regeneration of selected stands for age distribution.

Administration of public hunts by the SCWMRD, under the Came Management Area Program, have been held annually with hunting opportunities provided for deer, wild turkey, wild hogs, small game, and waterfowl on Tract 3. Hunting on Tracts 1 and 2 has been confined mostly to dove and quail. There have been no reports of deer taken from these two tracts. Camping at Talatha Campground on Tract 1 has been mostly by hunters in association with the SRP's managed deer hunts. On two occasions, in the past 4 to 6 years, groups have used the site for overnight camping by participants in demonstrations against this nation's nuclear policies.

Fishing pressure at Skinface Pond and Dead Lake on Tract 3 is about 200 user days per year. The area provides suitable habitat for several animals which are on the Rare and Endagnered Species List. American alligators, (Alligator mississippiensis) are known to occur in several locations on the property and would be provided protection. Some portions of the area appear to be suitable habitat for the Red-coickaded Woodpecker (Picoides berealis) although none are known to exist.

III. Alternatives Including the Proposed Action

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Alternative 1. No action - under this alternative the FS would retain jurisdiction and continue to implement FS programs. The area would remain open to the public. The Forest Service would deny the request by the Department of Energy and thus would be in the position of challenging the need of DOE to occupy and use the area in order to enhance the security of the Savannah River Plant.

Alternative 2. Occupancy and use as requested by the Department of Energy. Under this alternative DOE would have authority to:

--Control access to the land for forest management activities similar to the control procedures currently used for such activities conducted by Savannah River Forest Station on the SRP. A major execption would be that the procedure for calculating returns to Aiken County from timber receipts would remain unchanged.

--Discontinue public access to this land for camping, hunting, and fishing.

--Post and fence, where necessary, the land with U. S. Government "No Trespassing" signs identical to the signs currently used to delineate the SRP boundary.

The Crackerneck Game Management Area, which encompasses all three tracts would be closed. Hunting, fishing, and camping would be eliminated. The concerns by the public that this extent of control is not necessary would be overridden by concerns for public health, safety, and national security.

Alternative 3. Occupancy and use of the Talatha units by the Department of Energy - under this alternative DOE would have the same authority as in Alternative 2 on Tracts 1 and 2 hereafter referred to as the Talatha Unit. Current management direction would be followed by the FS on Tract 3, hereafter referred to as the Swamp Unit. The concerns expressed by the public concerning hunting and fishing would be satisfied to a large extent since the Swamp Unit is where most of the hunting and all of the fishing takes place. The group that is concerned about camping on the Talatha Unit would not be satisfied since no overnight camping would be permitted.

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The DOE would not gain control of any of the Swamp Unit which they maintain is essential to the security of the SRP.

Alternative 4. Preferred --Goodpancy and use of the Talatha and Swamp Units by the Department of Energy, with limited and controlled hunting and fishing permitted on portions of the Swamp Unit only.

This alternative provides for enhanced security of this vital national security facility while allowing limited and controlled hunting and fishing on that portion of the Swamp Unit as indicated on the map in Figure 3. Public access would be discontinued on all of the Talatha Unit and approximately 1,250 acres of the Swamp Unit lying adjacent to the parelleling SRP property. The remainder of the Swamp Unit consisting of approximately 3,530 acres would be available for hunting and fishing, for at least 20 days annually, under controlled conditions to be worked out between DOE and the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department. DOE would be able to implement the security enhancement they require through alternate measures that such an arrangement would necessitate. Hunting and fishing in the Swamp Unit would be reduced significantly by shortened seasons. The acreage on which to indulge in such activities would remain about the same since the area to be closed is not used to any great extent due to its inaccessibility.

Those concerned about loss of overnight camping would not be accommodated since no camping would be abailable on public lands within close proximity to SRP.

Evaluation and comparison of alternatives (Table 1) presents a comparison by alternatives of person-days utilized.

Alternative 1 is the "No Action" alternative. Under this alternative the public would be allowed to utilize the area for consumptive and non-consumptive uses. No opportunities for enhanced security would be provided. Alternative 2 would comply in full with DOE's request to exclude public use of the area. Fishing and camping would not be allowed. Eunting would not be allowed except for controlled deer hunts as specified by DOE. Alternative 3 would exclude public use on the smaller Talatha Unit while allowing the Swamp Unit to be utilized by the public. This differs from Alternative 1 by prohibiting public use on the Talatha Unit where use is considered rather light. It differs from Alternative 2 by allowing public use on the larger Swamp Unit which is in demand as a hunting and fishing area. Alternative 4 is the preferred alternative because it provides for enchancement of the security of the SRP while permitting controlled hunting and fishing on portions of the Swamp Unit. It differs from Alternative 1 by providing for the enhancement of security. Alternative 2 provides for enhancement of security but closes the area to public access while the preferred alternative provides for limited public access to a portion of the Swamp Unit while providing for enhanced security of the SRP. Alternative 3 provides for enhanced security on the Talatha Unit by denying public access. The Swamp Unit would be open to public access with no provisions for the enhancement of national security. Alternative 4, the preferred alternative, provides for mitigating the public's concerns by providing for limited hunting and fishing on portions of the Swamp Unit while complying with DOE's request for occupancy and use to enhance the national security of the SRP.

IV. Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action and Other Alternatives

The following are common to all alternatives and the environmental impacts are the same for all alternatives.

- A. Cultural resources and rare and endangered species would not be impacted since none of the alternatives involve surface disturbing activities.
- B. There are no prime farm lands nor range lands in the area under consideration.
- C. Civil rights, minority groups and women would not be affected by any of the alternatives since no action that would favor or discriminate against them is proposed.

Environmental Effects that vary by Alternative are as follows:

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The alternative of no action would allow continued public access to the entire area and would, in effect, place the FS in the position of challenging DOE's need for the land in order to enhance the security of this facility. DOE has the responsibility for determining security needs. This alternative would create no adverse impact on consumers. Forest land would not be affected. Wetlands and floodplains would continue to be managed under FS plans and would not be affected.

Alternative 2 which complies in full with CCE's request for occupancy and use of the area would exclude public access. Eunting, fishing, camping, and other public use would be prohibited except for controlled deer hunts as prescribed by DOE on its lands at the SRP. This alternative would result in the loss of the Crackerneck Game Management Area where approximately 1,315 person-days of consumptive use (hunting and fishing) would be lost. This loss has an estimated potential annual value of \$27,519. No records are available for non-consumptive uses such as bird watching, hiking, and primitive camping. General observation indicates light use estimated to have an annual value of \$1.150. Management of the natural resources such as timber, watershed, and wildlife habitat would continue under FS administration. This alternative would create no adverse resource impact other than that described under consumptive and non-consumptive uses by the public. Wetlands and floodplains would not be affected since management would continue under approved FS plans.

Alternative 3 would give DOE authority to occupy and use the Talatha Unit which is located on the upland and consists of two parcels consisting of 1,241 acres. The Swamp Unit consisting of 4,780 acres would not be affected. Hunting, fishing, camping, and other public use would be prohibited in the Talatha Unit. The Crackerneck Came Management Area would be reduced by 1,241 acres. _Approximately 290 person-days of consumptive use (hunting) would be lost. The loss has an estimated value of \$5,281. Hon-consumptive use (hiking, bird watching, and camping) would be discontinued. There are no records on use, but general observations indicate that use is light. The value of this loss is estimated to be \$1,150. Management of the natural resources such as timber, watershed, and wildlife habitat would continue under FS administration. This alternative would create no adverse resource impact other than that described under consumptive and non-consumptive uses by the public. There are no wetlands nor floodplains in the affected area.

The DOE would be prohibited from having any authority over the Swamp Unit which they require in order to enchance the national security of the SRP. This would place the FS in the position of challenging the need of the security that DOE requested. This alternative is not appropriate since DOE has the responsibility for determining their security needs.

Alternative 4 which provides for enchanced security and limited controlled hunting and fishing on a portion of the Swamp Unit is the preferred alternative. Hunting, camping, and other public use on the Talatha Unit would be prohibited. Closure of the Talatha Unit would result in a loss of approximately 290 person-days of consumptive use (hunting) with an estimated annual value of \$5,281. Hon-consumptive use (hiking and bird watching), which is regarded as relatively light, would be prohibited. The value of this loss is estimated to be \$1,150 annually.

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Consumptive uses (hunting and fishing) would be allowed on approximately 3,530 acres within the Swamp Unit for no less than 20 days annually. Open seasons would be much shorter than are current seasons. The impact of these controls could result in a potential loss of approximately \$9,637. Under current management, with the entire Swamp Unit open to hunting and fishing in season, the value is estimated to be \$22,238.

Management of the natural resources such as timber, watershed, and wildlife habitat would continue under FS administration. This alternative would require hand-tool clearing of approximately 1.7 miles through the Savannah River Swamp. No merchantable timber would be cut. This would be necessary in order to clearly separate the exclusion area from the controlled public use area. This would create no adverse environmental effect on the floodplain or wetlands since only hand tools would be allowed. Downed material would be required to be spread evenly in the cleared area so as not to interfere with stream flow. The effect on consumers would be loss of the use of Talatha Unit and a portion of the Swamp Unit and some additional loss in the Swamp Unit as a result of modified seasons. The value of consumptive and non-consumptive use that would be foregone is estimated to be \$16,068.

V. LIST OF AGENCIES AND PERSONS CONSULTED

Warren Abernathy of Senator Thurmond's Office

Dr. James Timmerman of South Carolina Wildlife & Marine Resources Department

Jeff Fuller of South Carolina Wildlife & Marine Resources Department

Mike Caudell of South Carolina Wildlife & Marine Resources Department

David Reid of Governor Riley's Office

Trish Jerman of Governor Riley's Office

Bernard Meng, III of Senator Hollings' Office

Betty Spence of South Carolina Wildlife Federation

Joe Cassels

Don Law of Aiken Standard & Review Newspaper

Thurmond Whatley of Aiken Standard & Review Newspaper

Hoyt Dunseith, Major of Jackson, SC

Jackson, SC Mayor and Town Council (5) and 25 citizens

Carl Langly of Augusta Herald Newspaper

Charles Meyer

Bill Hentz, Jr. of H. M. Hentz & Son, Timber Contractor

William Johnston of H. M. Hentz & Son, Timber Contractor

Jarrel Brown

Kenneth Jarrett

Phillip Kent of Augusta Chronicle & Herald Newspaper

Bill Baab of Augusta Chronicle & Herald Newspaper

Carrol Warner, Chairman, Aiken County Commissioners

Aiken County Council and approximately 75 attendees

Belton Weeks, III

Rusty Bethune

Richard W. Taylor

Tommy Davis

Dan Connelly

Audubon Society

Gene Whitman, Mayor, New Ellenton, SC and Council

Tom Plowden

Charles Crites

Richard Taylor

Thomas Moore, Senator SC Legislator

Nikki Setzler, Senator SC Legislator

William Jones, Representative SC Legislator

Tommy Davis

Donald Faglier

Frank Alexander

Howard Moormann

Al Harvey

M. R. Johnson, Spartanburg Nuclear Weapons Freeze

Dale Rutland

Rusty Bethune

Clarence Breeback

Reggie Barbee

Albert Blackwell, President Board of Directors, Piedmont Peace Resource Center

Fred Rhode

James D. Bailey

Wanda Kosh

Gerald Hogsed

MR. & Mrs. Ted Guenther

A. J. Barnett

Roger Crenshaw

Brett Bursey of Grass Roots Organization Workshop (GROW)

Carol Schafer of Grass Roots Organization Workshop (GROW)

Sue Bowman of Grass Roots Organization Workshop (GROW)

Robert L. Hallman of Grass Roots Organization Workshop (GROW)

Michael Rearden's Petition - 313 signatures

April 23,1984

46, 4/23-5-AEF-2

Forest Manager S.R.P. Forest Station P.O. Box A Aiken, S.C. 29801

Dear Sirs:

The purpose of this letter is to strongly encourage your office to deny the request of the Department of Energy to re-annex the wildlife area locally known as "Crackerneck" back into the Savannah River Project. Such an action would deny it's use by the general public and for questionable reasons.

Crackerneck has long been used and enjoyed by residents of the local community. It has been a source, (the only local one of it's type) of peace and relaxation to a community that has traditionally been supportive of the S.R.P. It has also served well to educate and to teach life lessons on the wilderness environment to the young people of our area. The loss of public use of this area would adversely affect the lives of many wildlife conscious local residents. We have attached as many petition signatures as we could obtain in the very short period of time provided. We understand that the final date for comment on this proposal to take Crackerneck away from the public is April 27,1984. We will wish to append this letter with any additional petition signatures received prior to this date.

The reported reason for the D.O.E. request to remove these lands from public access and use is to reduce security risks associated with the increasing threat of terrorism at the S.R.P. It makes little sense to us to close Crackerneck to public use while leaving other higher security risk areas open. Crackerneck does not present as high a risk to security as does the existance of S.C. Highway 125 which spans the length of the S.R.P. and is open to the general public. (Reference the articles in the Atlanta Constitution several years ago.) Crackerneck does not pose the security threat that the Savannah River does to the sensitive S.R.P. facilities located on, or very close to, the river. Do you also plan to close S.C. 125 and the Savannah River to use by the public?

There is also a potential legal question associated with the D.O.E. request. It is our understanding that lands deeded by the Federal Government for public use cannot be re-taken by the Government. Is this true? 11

In summary Sir, all those who have signed the attached petitions object to the removal of these lands from public use. We respectfully request that the proposal be denied and that these lands remain open to the general public and that they be administered as they have since deeded for public use. We further request that the questions asked on the first page of this letter be responded to prior to any decision on this matter.

Thank you for your interest, consideration and assistance in this matter. We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

J. Michael Reardon 1008 Hitchcock Drive

Aiken, S.C.

cc:

U.S.D.O.E. Manager, S.R.O.O. Aiken, S.C.

U.S.D.O.E. Director Office of Safeguards & Security S.R.O.O. Aiken, S.C.

REQUEST TO PRESERVE THE CRACKERNECK GAME MANAGEMENT AREA FOR PUBLIC USE

the undersigned feel that the Crackerneck Area presents no more of a security problem than any other lands joining Savannah River Plant. This Area is the only prime public tenting and fishing area available to Aiken County residents and the only Game Management free for over 100 miles where excellent duck hunting exists.

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April 23, 1984

59, 4/23-5-AEG4

Forest Manager Savennah River Forest Station P. O. Box A Aiken, S. C. 29801

Dear Sir:

WE THE UNDERSIGNED, in response to an article by Bill Baab in the Augusta Chronicle on Sunday, April 22, 1984 (page 9D) concerning the use of public lands for hunting we offer the following views:

We are coon hunters and have many coon hunting friends in the area. Most coon hunters that we know are grass-roots, honest, lawabiding, nature-loving citizens. Nost hunt strictly for the pleasure of seeing and hearing our dogs work. Also, most coon hunters are very respectful of the property of others (both public and private property).

We feel that the areas in question should continue to be accessable to coon hunters through game management permits issued by the State Wildlife Department. Since coon hunting is done at night, this sporting activity does not interfer with other hunting activities. We are also confident that coon hunting in these areas (by permit) poses no threat to national security or security as it relates to the Savannal: River Plant.

Large secluded public areas such as the Crackerneck Game Lanagetent Area are some of the few remaining areas where both dog and man are safe from the population and transportation density of most private lands. It would indeed be a big disappointment to many coon hunters if coon hunting were excluded from the public areas in question

Areas suitable for coon hunting are becoming fewer and fewer each year. We strongly feel that suitable public lands should be available for the sport and pleasure of coon hunting by responsible hunters who desire an opportunity to continue this ages-old activity in the safety of large isolated public land areas.

Your response to this matter will be appreciated.

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Randy Williams 663-6143

Bill Harring 149-2535

D. J. Kendrick Bunde. Mul Ellenta, S.C. 29809

J. S. parrish ANN Dr. New Ellentan 95809

Billy Wicker
Ronald Heaton, Vice Chairperson South Carolina Libertarian Party
James Newman
Lisa Wicker
Danny Brown
Petition with 96 signatures

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WE THE UNDERSIGNED ARE OPPOSED TO THE TRANSFER OF FOREST SERVICE LANDS TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EMERGY, AND WE ARE AGAINST THE CLOSING OF THE CROCKERNECK GAME ABMANAGEMENT AREA. WE REQUEST THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY HOLD PUBLIC HEARINGS TO GIVE ALL CITIZENS A CHANCE TO BE HEARD.

65,4/27-5-AB-2

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Ronald D. Barnett
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Carol A. Hastings
Cliff Hastings